



*The Town of Leesburg*  
**INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

To: John Wells, Town Manager

From: Susan Berry Hill, Director

Cc: Chris Murphy, Zoning Administrator  
Carmen Babonneau, Zoning Inspector

Date: December 4, 2013

Subject: Information Only - Sign Enforcement during Holiday Season

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Consistent with yearly practice, the Department of Planning and Zoning will not issue notice of violation letters for sign ordinance infractions during the month of December, 2013. We have instituted this practice for years in the past and the purpose of this practice is in recognition that the holiday season is very important to the Leesburg business community and in order to be supportive of business efforts, staff will not actively pursue signage violations.

We will continue to follow up on complaints that we receive, or violations that staff observes, to businesses that are violating the sign ordinance by first paying a visit to the business and second by sending a courtesy letter that explains the violation. If corrections are not made, as noted above, we will not be taking the next step in the process which is to send a notice of violation to the business in the month of December.

While this holiday practice should make most businesses happy, it is important to note that some complainants (some of which are businesses) may not be pleased with this practice. For example, we are currently working with one business downtown on their complaint about another business's signage. The complaint is valid and the offending store continues to post signage on site that violates the zoning ordinance despite staff's visits and courtesy letters. We will explain our holiday enforcement practice to the complainant, but given interaction to date with this person, I do not anticipate that the goodwill holiday practice of relaxing sign enforcement will be received favorably and you and/or Council members may hear from this complainant. The complainant and the community at-large have an expectation that the sign ordinance be consistently and fairly administered. The Department makes that expectation a mission. That said, we also try to balance this mission with business-friendly approaches such as temporarily suspending sign enforcement during the holidays.

Once the holiday season is over, staff will resume our normal signage enforcement practice which is: 1) an on-site visit with the business; 2) a courtesy letter to follow up the visit if the signage issue is not addressed within a given period of time; and 3) a notice of violation explaining that the violation must be addressed by a date-certain or Town staff will pursue fines and subsequently court action if the violation is not corrected.

For your information, in the early part of 2014, the Department is planning a comprehensive outreach effort to explain signage requirements as a refresher to all businesses. A similarly structured outreach effort was conducted after the comprehensive revisions to the sign ordinance were approved by Council in 2010. The outreach in 2014 will also be used to explain that signage enforcement is done Monday through Friday and not over the weekends. A number of businesses put signs out on weekends that do not comply with ordinance requirements. For the most part this signage is removed on/by Monday morning but if not, staff proceeds with enforcement of the ordinance as usual. The business-to-business complaint that was noted above is a complaint about illegal signage on the weekends. The complainant has asked why the Town does not enforce its ordinances and the response has been that the Town does not enforce the sign ordinance on weekends. While most businesses like this, some do not including the complainant referenced.

Once the planning for this outreach effort has been developed, I will inform you and Council regarding the process and timing of the effort. The EDC and LDBA will also be informed before we begin such effort so that everyone knows about it.